



2006 Flu Season Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

What is Influenza (also called Flu)?

The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. The best way to prevent this illness is by getting a flu **vaccination** each fall.

Every year in the United States, on average:

5% to 20% of the population gets the flu; more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and; about 36,000 people die from flu. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications.

What are the symptoms of Flu?

Symptoms of flu include:

fever (usually high)

headache

extreme tiredness

dry cough

sore throat

runny or stuffy nose

muscle aches

Stomach symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea, also can occur but are more common in children than adults

Can there be complications from the flu?

Complications of flu can include bacterial pneumonia, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. Children may get sinus problems and ear infections.

How does flu spread?

Flu viruses spread in respiratory droplets caused by coughing and sneezing. They usually spread from person to person, though sometimes people become infected by touching something with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

How does flu spread? Continued from page 1

Most healthy adults may be able to infect others beginning 1 day **before** symptoms develop and up to 5 days **after** becoming sick. **That means that you can pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick, as well as while you are sick.**

How can I prevent getting the flu?

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination each fall. **There are two types of vaccines:**

The **"flu shot"** – an inactivated vaccine (containing killed virus) that is given with a needle.

The **nasal-spray flu vaccine** – a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu (sometimes called LAIV for "Live Attenuated Influenza Vaccine"). LAIV is approved for use in healthy people 5 years to 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

About two weeks after vaccination, antibodies develop that protect against influenza virus infection. Flu vaccines will not protect against influenza-like illnesses caused by other viruses.

When should I get vaccinated?

October or November is the best time to get vaccinated, but getting vaccinated in December or even later can still be beneficial. Flu season can begin as early as October and last as late as May.

Is there a cost for the flu shot or flu nasal spray?

The cost for a flu shot is \$25. The nasal flu mist costs \$35.

If you are enrolled in Medicare Part B or Passport insurance plans, those plans will cover the cost for flu immunizations. The Louisville Metro Health Department will not turn anyone away because of inability to pay.

Who Should Get Vaccinated? Continued from page 2

In general, anyone who wants to reduce their chances of getting the flu can get vaccinated. However, certain people should get vaccinated each year. They are either people who are at high risk of having serious flu complications or people who live with or care for those at high risk for serious complications. People who should get vaccinated each year are:

1.) People at high risk for complications from the flu:

- People 50 years and older
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house those with long-term illnesses
- Adults and children 6 months and older with chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma
- Adults and children 6 months and older who needed regular medical care or were in a hospital during the previous year because of a metabolic disease (like diabetes), chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system (including immune system problems caused by medicines or by infection with human immunodeficiency virus [HIV/AIDS])
- Children 6 months to 18 years of age who are on long-term aspirin therapy. (Children given aspirin while they have influenza are at risk of Reye syndrome.)
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- All children 6 months to five years of age
- People with any condition that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions (that is, a condition that makes it hard

- to breathe or swallow, such as brain injury or disease, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other nerve or muscle disorders.)
- Any person in close contact with someone in a high-risk group (see above) should get vaccinated. This includes all health-care workers, household contacts and out-of-home caregivers of children 6 to 59 months of age, and close contacts of people 65 years and older

The Louisville Metro Health Department will prioritize giving flu vaccines to the above mentioned at-risk populations during the month of October. We encourage everyone to get a flu shot starting in early November.

Who Should Not Be Vaccinated? Continued from page 3

Some people should not be vaccinated without first consulting a physician. They include:

- People who have a severe allergy to eggs
- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) within 6 weeks of getting an influenza vaccine previously
- Children less than 6 months of age (influenza vaccine is not approved for use in this age group)
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated until their symptoms lessen

If you have questions about whether you should get a flu vaccine, consult your health-care provider.